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DIPLOMAT TALKS SENSE

A senior British diplomat was "retired" by the Foreign Office on September 15th because he had urged a sensible, negotiated solution of the West Berlin problem. The diplomat, Geoffrey McDermott, was, until his forced retirement, British political adviser in West Berlin with the rank of minister.

In an article in the London "Observer" on September 23rd Mr McDermott outlined his plan for the solution of the West Berlin problem. His main proposals were:

1. The German Democratic Republic and the present frontiers of Germany should be recognised.

2. West Berlin should be recognised as a separate state, and the present occupation status in West Berlin should be abolished and replaced by international guarantees.

3. The three German states (the German Democratic Republic, the German Federal Republic and West Berlin) should become members of the UN.

The "McDermott Plan" coincided broadly with suggestions which have been made during the past four years by the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, though there were a number of points of difference. In publishing the plan Mr McDermott stated: "These suggestions preserve the interests of all the interested parties. They also provide an opportunity of removing Berlin from the very dangerous spot which it has occupied for so many years."

In view of the great importance of the "McDermott Plan", GERMAN REPORT reprints below extended extracts from Mr McDermott's article in the "Observer" of September 23rd:

"The Strange Case of Mr McD."

"It is not known whether this conspicuous display of sanity by a Foreign Office employee (McDermott) was the cause of his sacking. All manner of half truths and downright lies have been peddled to conceal what really happened. But the case of Mr McDermott is obviously one of cardinal importance.

"For years 'Tribune' has been making the same kind of allegations ... which now bear the authority of a high British official. Our warnings – and similar warnings when they were made by R. H. S. Crossmann a few weeks ago – were scoffed at.

"Most of the rest of the British press has chosen to discuss Berlin and the German question in the orthodox Cold War terms prescribed by Dr Adenauer. What will they say now when 'the revelations' come from one who has seen the Berlin crisis from the inside?"

"Tribune", London, September 28th

I took up my post as British Minister in Berlin in June 1961, and saw through the critical year that followed. Having now retired from the Foreign Service I can express my views on that year, and on the future, more publicly than before ...

Under agreements made soon after the end of the war, not only was Germany divided into four zones, but Berlin, left more than 100 miles inside the Soviet zone, was divided into four sectors, and the access routes of Britain, America and France by air, road, rail and water were defined and guaranteed. These arrangements constituted the Occupation Status of Berlin. This status was modified in turn by the setting up in 1950 of the Federal Republic, which all four Allies (and most of the rest of the world) recognise, and in 1951 of the so-called German Democratic Republic, so far recognised only by Soviet Russia and her Communist allies.

(Editors' note: Mr McDermott's history is curiously weak. Both the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic were established in 1949.)

Nevertheless, the Occupation Status remains the basis for the presence of the Western Allies' occupation forces in West Berlin; and although the Russian inveigh against this and state that they have no occupation forces in Berlin, "the capital of the GDR" they kept, until a week or two ago, a Soviet Commandant at his own H.Q. in East Berlin. In addition, under their treaty of 1955 with the "independent GDR" they maintain some 22 divisions, with the most modern armament, within easy reach of Berlin.

Militarily, therefore, the Western Allies' position in Berlin is nonsense. The Americans maintain some 6,000 men there, the British some 3,000 and the French some 2,000. Their access routes, except possibly by air, could all be cut at a moment's notice ... But this is not, of course the point, which is an entirely political one.

(Mr McDermott then describes the "cumbersome machinery" by which the western allies conduct their policy in West Berlin, remarking in passing that the British Commandants "tend

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to be on the verge of retirement and to have little political experience".)

Today, Germany is divided into three: West Germany, East Germany and Berlin. The first two both claim Berlin as their capital. But the deplorable separation of German from German is for one thing a direct part of the price the Germans must pay for Hitler and his war. Secondly, reunification can, to speak realistically, only come about in one of two ways in the foreseeable future — nuclear war or a complete switch of policy by the Soviet Union. (Pipedreams about a complete Soviet withdrawal in any other circumstances are a waste of time.) These are both exceedingly unlikely, and in either case the problem in anything like its present form will by then have disappeared.

We might also take a closer look than usual at the Germans themselves. The majority of the people in West Germany are not terribly interested in Berlin: their reasons are either selfishness or resignation. They are happy to pay conscience money in the shape of subsidies to Berlin, and leave it at that. The Federal German politicians, who, in any case, are not held in high esteem by the people as a whole, work up the Berlin question constantly and irresponsibly: they frequently use it as a stick with which to beat their allies. There are good reasons for doubting the sincerity of most of them — not least that of Dr Adenauer, who could bring himself to visit Berlin only some weeks after August 13, 1961, and has since gone there as seldom as possible.

Again, a number of Germans are certainly working towards the possession of a German-controlled nuclear weapon; my views on this prospect differ not at all from those of Mr Khrushchov ...

For cogent political and humanitarian reasons the West cannot abandon Berlin: in a nutshell, this would lead to the collapse of NATO. Mr Khrushchov has a tactical stranglehold on it, but the fact that he has shown himself prepared to wait proves that he realises that his political and strategic hold is much less strong. He will not run the risk of American nuclear intervention; he is prepared up to a point to see Berlin "wither on the bough" and he will push it along in that direction by, for instance, allowing the East Germans to nibble further; they have already nibbled considerably at its life.

Consequently there is room for negotiation. By this I mean neither acceptance of Russian demands wholesale — they would never expect that — nor, on the Western side, waffling on about "improving the situation in West Berlin." It is true that the present Occupation Status is satisfactory from the Western standpoint, as far as it goes, but it suffers from grave defects.

Because it is anachronistic, it is inefficient from the West's point of view, and undignified, too, because it makes the Western Powers appear always on the defensive, and nearly always ineffectual into the bargain, in Berlin. Secondly, Mr Khrushchov is determined to abolish it, and will do so sooner or later. Thirdly, and this is the gravest aspect, as a result Berlin is a perpetual and deep danger to world peace; and this situation cannot be allowed to continue much longer.

Here then are my broad suggestions for a Berlin solution, which I believe are realistic and so stand a chance of acceptance by both sides. They would give both the West and the Communists much of what they require, and they could remove the constant ugly friction, and threat of war, from both sides.

1. The Western Powers and the Soviet Union would agree that the long-term aim is the reunification of Germany (both sides have stated this to be their policy) and the agreements would be subject to review in, say, 20 years.

2. The present German frontiers would be recognised as definitive (this is plain common sense, and there is no advantage in "waiting for a Peace Treaty").

3. The GDR should be recognised as a separate state — as indeed it already is: a state ruled by Germans. Britain and her allies do considerable trade with it, Federal Germany does very considerable trade indeed. East German authorities already control 95 per cent of the people going into and out of Berlin, including of course, all the normal, i. e., non-official, nationals of the Western Allies, and are recognised by all concerned for these purposes. In addition, there are numerous administrative and technical matters, e. g., the running of the railways throughout Berlin and across the GDR to West Germany, in which the East German authorities' responsibility is fully recognised by all. Herr Brandt himself favours an extension of these contacts, as he once more made clear in a recent speech.

As for the international political implications, (a) such recognition need not imply approval any more than our recognition of the regimes of the other satellites; (b) it need not confer any great advantages on East Germany — the Bulgarian, Rumanian and Hungarian regimes, for instance, have hardly achieved any great standing as a result of recognition by the West; (c) it would mean recog-

The Author of the "McDermott Plan"

Geoffrey Lyster McDermott, author of the plan for a solution of the German problem published on this page, was, until his forced resignation on September 15th, a model orthodox British diplomat. Born in 1912, he was educated at Marlborough and Cambridge, where he took first class honours in modern languages. He entered the diplomatic service in 1935, and moved steadily up the ladder, serving in Sofia, Ankara, Cairo and Santiago before becoming Head of the Permanent Under-Secretary's Department in the Foreign Office in 1953. In 1959 he became British Political Representative with the Middle East Forces based on Cyprus, and in June 1961 he was sent to West Berlin as political adviser of the British Commandant with the rank of Minister.

Commenting on his "resignation" from this post in September, the London "Observer" stated: "He was fired, though the euphemism of 'retirement' was preserved to the last ... His fate, as it becomes known, seems likely to act as a warning to diplomats who are tempted to show too much independence and initiative."

Did Adenauer Take a Hand?

"McDermott held the view that sooner or later Britain would have to recognise East Germany — and Dr Adenauer got to know about it. These days, when the (British) Government is desperately trying to curry favour in Bonn, the sacrifice of a distinguished British civil servant may strike Lord Home as a small price to pay for winning Adenauer's favour. McDermott's fault, it should be noted, was not that he publicly expressed these views; merely that he advanced them in confidential communications to his superiors. It is difficult to think of a more effective way of discouraging independence — and honesty — among our diplomats."

"New Statesman", London, September 28th

nising a state of affairs which will almost certainly exist for a very long time, for the reasons already explained.

4. Berlin would be recognised as a separate entity ... In practice we should no doubt have to rest content with West Berlin: this has 2,250,000 inhabitants ...

(Editor's note: In some of the following points, Mr McDermott refers simply to "Berlin" when, from the context, he obviously means West Berlin)

5. Berlin would make agreements with any powers she chose — except the two Germanys — to station their troops in reasonable numbers in the city. This would be similar to the agreements between the GDR and the Warsaw Pact countries. No doubt West Berlin would choose the Western Allies, and this, with point 6 below, would ensure that she would be really independent and not merely "free" in the Communist sense ... It is true that Mr Khrushchov has grumbled at the presence of the Allies' troops as constituting an "aggressive NATO base" but he does not believe a word of it, and chiefly wants to get rid of the Occupation Status. A Western advantage would be that the Allies would be represented in Berlin by Ambassadors in the usual way, who would be independent of the Ambassadors in Bonn and who would of course control their own forces in Berlin.

(Editor's note: Here Mr McDermott contradicts himself; if West Berlin is not a NATO base, why should a change in the West Berlin status lead to "the collapse of NATO" as he stated earlier in his article.)

6. The Four Powers would agree on guarantees for the access of their own representatives, both civilian and military, to Berlin. The numbers would be very small compared with the total traffic between Berlin and elsewhere. East Germany could derogate sovereignty in this respect to the USSR without any cause for complaint — such arrangements are often made between allies.

7. Some important agencies of the UN would be moved to Berlin. Mr Khrushchov has shown some signs of agreeing to this ...

8. The three German states would become members of the UN, giving advantages to both sides.

9. The three German states would adhere to these agreements; indeed any number of other states would be welcome as guarantors.

These suggestions, I think, preserve the interests of all the interested parties. They also provide an opportunity of removing Berlin from the very dangerous spot which it has occupied for so many years, and will otherwise continue to occupy for many more. Berlin is well worth a visit, as the Berliners say; it might be worth a battle; it is not worth a war.

POOR OLD STRAUSS

By our Bribery-and-Corruption Correspondent

Franz Josef Strauss, West Germany's hard-working and high-living Minister of Defence, feels these days that he is rather hard-done-by.

He was just recovering from revelations made early this year that he had been mixed up in a bribery scandal which would have netted him about £1,000,000 if it had come off, when a West German news magazine published details of another big money corruption case implicating his wife and his political friends.

Herr Strauss's first scandal broke on January 31st, when "Spiegel", West Germany's most influential news magazine, published photostats and sworn depositions showing that Strauss had personally written letters of recommendation to US Secretary of Defence urging the award of a vast building contract to a fly-by-night firm founded by a group of his intimate friends. Strauss was in line to get 25% of the profits, estimated at some £4,000,000, the news magazine reported.

A special whitewashing commission of the West German Parliament was established to investigate the serious charges. After five months of investigation, marked by a curious number of witnesses who could not remember anything when they got on the stand, the commission submitted a report to Parliament stating timidly that Strauss had been "unwise" to get mixed up in the affairs of the phoney building firm.

This report was too much even for the usually disciplined Bonn assembly, and the coalition Free Democrats joined with the opposition Social Democrats in rejecting the report, and telling the commission to re-examine the evidence. Chancellor Adenauer, with his usual clear-sighted way of seeing a Red under every bed, described the vote as "a plot by the neutralists to undermine our defence policy". Since then the Parliamentary Commission has met a few times, and taken as long as possible about cooking up a revised report on the bribery case.

But just as the story of the million-pound bribe was slowly becoming covered by the sand-drifts of history, the news magazine "Spiegel" leaped into the fray again in late September with another well-documented article on the swamp of corruption surrounding Defence Minister Strauss. On September 26th the magazine made the following charges:

1. Dr Aloys Brandenstein, adoptive uncle of Strauss's wife, utilised this relationship in order to advance, in the course of five years, from a bankrupt to a multi-millionaire. Although he had no experience in the branch, Dr Brandenstein, because of his family links, received enormous Bundeswehr orders for tank treads.

2. Dr Peter Deeg, a drinking companion of Herr Strauss, and a lawyer with no connections with the arms trade, sold the Bundeswehr 25 million marks worth of artillery shells. Once again, his only qualification for the business was his link with Minister Strauss.

3. Strauss himself recently negotiated for the purchase of a country house in Switzerland costing about £150,000, although neither he nor his wife have legally acquired private fortunes amounting to anything like this sum. The magazine suggested that purchases of this size could only be made with ill-gotten gains.

Political observers in Bonn noted that Strauss made no attempt to file libel charges against the magazine, although he generally rushes to law at the drop of a hat. In an obvious attempt to provoke Herr Strauss into taking action, "Spiegel" repeated its charges in even more definite terms on October 3rd.

The comment of one cynical Bonn journalist was typical: "Nothing will happen to Strauss, although everyone knows that he is up to his neck in all sorts of bribery and corruption. Why should it? Nothing has happened to State Secretary Hans Globke, although it is a matter of public knowledge that he drafted Hitler's anti-Semitic race laws which led to the murder of millions; so why should Adenauer take any action against Strauss, who has only committed the venial sin of grabbing a few million marks?"

Relations With Britain

An Interview with Johannes Koenig, Deputy Foreign Minister of the GDR

Question: *What can you say about the present state of the relations between the GDR and Great Britain?*

Answer: In the economic field the GDR and Great Britain have maintained good contacts for a long time. Trade is developing on the basis of annual trade agreements which are concluded between the Chamber of Foreign Trade of the GDR and the Federation of British Industries and approved by the Ministries of Trade of the two states. Apart from that, the Chamber of Foreign Trade of the GDR maintains a representation in London. But the existing trading possibilities are far from being exploited to the full.

Many British Members of Parliament and of municipal councils, trade unionists, scientists and artists from Great Britain have visited the GDR and convinced themselves of the peaceful aspirations of our Republic and its achievements in the economic, scientific and cultural fields.

As a whole, the relations between the GDR and Great Britain are, however, still very unsatisfactory. This is to be regretted because it is neither in the interest of the two states, nor in the interest of the relaxation of tension in Europe and the world.

Question: *What are the main obstacles to normalisation of relations?*

Answer: The development of contacts in all fields is frustrated by an abnormal situation: the absence of diplomatic or consular relations between two states with a high standard of industry, science and culture.

This abnormal situation is also shown, for instance, by the fact that GDR citizens wishing to travel to Great Britain must still apply for discriminating "provisional travel documents", as they are called, issued by the illegal "Allied Travel Office" in West Berlin. This is an institution subjecting Great Britain in the question of entry permits for GDR citizens to the decisions of the NATO Council. In practice this means that it is not the British authorities who decide on whether or not GDR citizens may travel or not to Great Britain, but the representatives of foreign countries. Two examples illustrate the result of the present state of affairs: Recently two outstanding GDR scientists were invited by a British medical association to take part in a professional conference. They were refused entry permits. The same thing happened to an artist who had been commissioned to work on the new cathedral in Coventry.

We think that it would be in Britain's interest if this situation and this iron curtain against the free exchange and contacts in the field of science, culture and sports were abolished as quickly as possible.

The GDR is ready to normalize relations with all states on the basis of the principles of peaceful co-existence. We know that broad circles in Great Britain recognise the real facts about Germany, and the existence of two German states, and demand that the logical conclusions be drawn. The GDR has proved that it has learnt the lessons from German history and represents the real interests of the German people, due to its anti-fascist, anti-militarist character and its fight for peace and friendship between peoples.

It is obvious that most of the obstacles to a normalisation of relations arise from the West German Government's efforts to prevent other countries from establishing normal relations with the GDR. The West German Government wants to prevent the recognition of the GDR at all costs, and interferes in the foreign policy of other countries by means of the so-called "Hallstein Doctrine". The facts, however, show that this policy has reached a deadlock and that it cannot hinder realities asserting themselves in the relations with the GDR. At present the GDR maintains diplomatic or consular relations with 21 states, and nothing can halt this development.

Question: *What can you say about the possibilities of improving relations?*

Answer: Undoubtedly there are possibilities for improving relations and they could be exploited the better, the more relations with the GDR are based on the recognition of realities. Every step towards the normalisation of relations with the GDR would be a great contribution to relaxation of international tension. The same is true with regard to the liquidation of the vestiges of the Second World War by way of concluding a peace treaty, which is long overdue, and the solution of the West Berlin question on this basis. What can be done immediately is to expand the existing contacts. First of all I have in mind trading contacts. For example, trade agreements, as we have stated repeatedly on earlier occasions, could possibly cover not just one year but several years, and the agreements could be concluded by the Ministries of Trade themselves. This, undoubtedly, would be in the interests of both sides.

Other possibilities of immediate steps are arrangements on exchanges in the fields of science, culture and sports. This could only be brought about if artists, sportsmen and scientists from the GDR were allowed to travel freely and without facing any discrimination.

Peaceful co-existence is the only possible and the only realistic way for states with different social systems to live together. The best guarantees of co-existence are wide peaceful relations of all kinds between states. We feel that these principles should be applied in the relations between the GDR and Great Britain.

(In an interview with Radio Berlin International)

Brandt for Britain

West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt, prominent cold war propagandist, will visit Britain at the beginning of November. He is scheduled to open an exhibition in London which seeks to prove that West Berlin is worth a war, and in addition to have talks with British politicians.

Cobalt Cannon in GDR

The first GDR-made "cobalt cannon" — an instrument for curing cancer and related diseases with rays from radioactive cobalt — was produced by scentists and technicians in Dresden in early October. The head of the instrument, which alone weighs 1½ tons, rotates around the patient while rays with an intensity of 2000 curies destroy the diseased tissue. The new instrument, which will be installed in Leipzig, is the first of a series to be produced here, thus making it unnecessary to import any more of the expensive instruments.

1933: HITLER'S PRISONERS
1962: ADENAUER'S PRISONERS

Dozens of trade unionists and communists who served long terms in Hitler's prisons and concentration camps for their anti-fascist activities are today serving sentences in Adenauer's prisons, often for the identical "offences" for which they were jailed by the nazis.

Here are details of the cases of seven of these West German anti-fascists:

1. Karl Schabrod

Under Hitler: Arrested on the night of the Reichstag Fire in 1933, and held for 14 months in concentration camp. Released, re-arrested, and sentenced on July 28th 1934 to life imprisonment for "preparing high treason" i.e. working for the overthrow of Hitler. In prison for nearly eleven years, over six years in solitary.

Under Adenauer: Arrested in September 1958 and sentenced to nine months imprisonment for "continuing the activities of the banned Communist Party". His crime was that he had stood as an independent candidate in the North-Rhine-Westphalia provincial elections of 1958. Re-arrested in July 1961 for attempting to stand as an independent candidate in the West German General Election with a programme of German neutralisation and peaceful coexistence. Sentenced on July 23rd 1962 to two years imprisonment for "continuing the activities of a banned organisation", "leading an anti-constitutional association", and "secretly endangering the security of the state".

2. Ludwig Landwehr

Under Hitler: Sentenced to 15 months in 1933 for anti-fascist activities. Re-arrested on September 1st 1939 and sent to Buchenwald Concentration Camp, where he was held until April 1945.

Under Adenauer: Arrested on July 26th 1962 and now held on remand, charged with "continuing the activities of the banned Communist Party". His crime is that he stood as an independent candidate in the West German General Election of 1961. He was arrested immediately after he had published details showing that West German school teacher Wolfgang Otto, former SS man, was an accomplice in the murder of Communist leader Ernst Thaelmann in Buchenwald Concentration Camp in 1944.

3. Artur Hoppe

Under Hitler: Sentenced to 30 months in 1933 for anti-fascist activities, then held for a further two years in Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

Under Adenauer: Sentenced on October 21st 1961 to three years imprisonment for "anti-constitutional activities". His crimes were that he had stood as an independent candidate in the West German General Elections, and in addition published "subversive" leaflets. One of these leaflets produced in evidence consisted of the text of a speech delivered at the UN General Assembly by Soviet Premier Khrushchov.

4. Walter Kruse

Under Hitler: Spent the entire twelve years of the nazi period in prison and concentration camp.

Under Adenauer: Arrested on October 26th 1961 on charges of "anti-constitutional activities". Today has been nearly one year on remand, not yet brought to trial.

5. Emil Sander

Under Hitler: Arrested in 1933 and sent to concentration camp. Released in 1936 and escaped to Spain where he fought in the International Brigades. Later interned in France.

Under Adenauer: Arrested in July 1961. Sentenced on July 23rd 1962 to 15 months imprisonment for standing as independent candidate in the West German General Elections. The charges were identical to those made against Karl Schabrod (see above).

6. Peter Umland

Under Hitler: 1933-1934 in Esterwegen Concentration Camp, 1944–1945 in Neuengamme Concentration Camp.

Under Adenauer: Sentenced on October 21st 1961 to 42 months imprisonment for standing as independent election candidate, and for helping West German trade union delegations to visit the GDR.

7. Werner Wischmann

Under Hitler: Sentenced to eighteen months in 1933 for anti-fascist activities. Escaped abroad and fought as lieutenant in the International Brigades in Spain; later captured by the Gestapo and spent three years in concentration camp.

Under Adenauer: Sentenced on October 21st 1961 to 30 months imprisonment on the same charges as Artur Hoppe (see above).

Protests against this re-imprisonment of men who fought Hitler can be sent to the nearest West German Embassy or to Chancellor Adenauer, Bonn, West Germany. The Committee for the Protection of Human Rights, 8 Thaelmann Platz, Berlin W 8, German Democratic Republic, would be grateful to receive copies of any such protests.

Rosa Thaelmann Dies

Rosa Thaelmann, widow of Ernst Thaelmann, German Communist leader, died in Berlin on September 21st at the age of 72. Her husband was murdered by the nazis in Buchenwald Concentration camp in August 1944; he had been chairman of the Communist Party of Germany since 1925, and had served 11 years without trial in various nazi prisons.

Rosa Thaelmann, laundry worker and active trade unionist, married Thaelmann in 1915. She played an active part, side by side with her husband, in the revolutionary struggles of the Weimar Republic, and during the workers' rising in Hamburg in 1923 she served as courier with the workers' battalions.

After Ernst Thaelmann had been arrested by the nazis in 1933, his wife played an important role in maintaining contact between the illegal Communist Party active in Germany, and her husband in jail.

In May 1944, she too was arrested by the nazis, and sent to Ravensbrueck Concentration Camp. After she was liberated by the Red Army she played a prominent part in building the German Democratic Republic, and was an active member of the People's Chamber.

Speeding the Spuds

By Allen Mann

After a sprint through the chilly October fog at 5:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning, I was surprised to find the underground train filled with people, and crowding up more and more with each station. When we arrived at East Berlin's Lichtenberg Railway Station, we met thousands of others who had come by bus, tram or elevated railway. My surprise was gone — all were here for the two big "potato express" trains leaving at 6:00 o'clock. Signs announced the proper track and that no tickets were required.

I joined a group of nine friends at the agreed-upon newspaper stand and boarded the train for Seelow District, an agricultural area near the Oder River on the GDR's eastern border. Surprisingly enough, a comfortable, leather-upholstered train had been chartered for the 90 minute trip, instead of the wooden-benched old waggons I had expected.

My group, all from a large East Berlin publishing house, included a young, jovial magazine editor, several publishers' readers (one girl an expert in Romance languages), a book designer, several typists and secretaries and the company chauffeur with his tough Berlin sarcastic humour. Like most of the other potato volunteers on the train, they were between 20 and 35 years old, though older men and women up to about 60 were also among the crowd. Four of our group settled down to Germany's favourite card game of Skat, the editor read a book, I my newspaper, and the rest talked and joked. An increasing chatter of voices and laughter filled the train, the inevitable jokesters were their usual loud selves, and it would have been hard to convince even the most cynical western journalist that this bunch were being forced to the fields at the point of a gun.

Finally we left the train at a little country station and climbed up into one of a long row of open and covered lorries, buses, open trailers pulled by diesel tractors and assorted other vehicles. We were jammed in with 20 others from various East Berlin administrative offices in a wild chase through 15 miles of fog-bound countryside. At last, after a final short stretch in a horse-drawn cart, the ten of us arrived in a typical farmer's barnyard with its barking watchdog, its scampering chickens and geese and its central manure pile.

The farmer, a leader in the little local cooperative farm, which had only about five or ten able-bodied members, was only too glad to see us, and was more than a little curious about this bunch of city slickers who were to help bring in his potatoes.

* * *

Getting in the potatoes was vitally urgent this year in the GDR. Last year the potato crop was only 60% of normal, and the country had suffered the results severely. Not only do people here eat amazing quantities of potatoes, but pigs and other livestock depend largely on them, too, and this meant shortages of pork, sausage and other commodities.

Despite a late, cold spring and a rainy, miserable summer, the potato harvest promises to be good this year, but it must be brought in as rapidly as possible, because early frosts with the potatoes still unharvested could spell catastrophe. But there are not nearly enough farmers to master this job at present, the new cooperative farms are not so well organised as yet, and the growing number of potato combines cannot master the job either.

So the newspapers are filled with reports and exhortations on the potato harvest; students, older school pupils, soldiers and government employees are spending a week or more in the fields, and thousands of people like ourselves come out to help on Saturday or Sunday. The Polish and other immigrant labourers who once toiled in the fields before 1945 are no longer here; the city-dwellers fill in until new machines now coming off the production lines can fill the gap.

* * *

Our group finally started work about 9:15; joking as we moved down the rows, throwing the potatoes, which had already been uncovered, into the baskets provided. Two men were kept busy emptying the full baskets into the adjacent horse-drawn cart. The fog had lifted but the sun was hidden — ideal cool weather for a job like this, but as we worked, the joking faded a bit and we grew quieter. The job was not unpleasant, but we were all happy when noon arrived. We rode back in the horse-cart to the farmer's house, washed up and sat down to a simple, but hearty and ample meal of potato, beans and pork stew with a cherry pudding to top it off.

We sat at a long table in the farmer's main room, with the heavy old German furniture and rather incongruous TV set so common in farmers' parlours here. We got along quite well with both the farmer and his wife, who were pleasant people but, like farmers everywhere, had many problems and complained about them freely. One was worth noting; their daughter could not help on the farm or in the household because she was off at college. This was one complaint most small farmers in the area had never had in the past.

They were very grateful for helpers who cost them nothing but the meal and refreshments, but were just a little curious as to whether we had really come here without compulsion. It was not so easy to explain. There was really no compulsion, but it is only fair to admit that a form of "moral pressure" was used. At meetings here, people are asked to pledge a certain number of hours of voluntary labour every year; most people pledge about ten. It is possible to refuse to pledge, but it does not "look good" and most are ashamed to, even if they are not enthusiastic about the idea. Some people work for a few Saturday afternoons helping to make lawns or playgrounds near new housing projects; others go harvesting in the autumn. There are also coupons for work done, and the most industrious volunteers may win prizes or awards, but usually there is no other reward than a feeling of satisfaction or an assuaged conscience. I have never heard that anyone suffered in any way for not fulfilling such a pledge.

After lunch, we had somewhat less enthusiasm than in the morning, but back we went to the endless-looking rows, and to the stooping, squatting or kneeling for infinite white potatoes which we were slowly coming to detest. The longer we worked, the more our backs and legs ached, the less we spoke, the more often we looked at our snail-paced watches. But everyone — editor, chauffeur, typist and Romance literature expert — kept going steadily onward, just as quickly as the farm members who worked with us, right up to the 4:00 p.m. hour of deliverance.

On the way home, in waggon, lorry, train and underground the volunteers looked rather more tired than when they started, but they soon recovered their cheer and their humour. We knew of the muscular aches and pains in store for us, but most of us had a satisfied feeling about our contribution to the harvest campaign, and we shall probably be out in the potato fields again some Saturday in 1963.

Portland in Bernburg

White cement powder in great quantities began pouring from the production lines of a huge new factory in Bernburg on October 5th. The plant, which started production after less than three years construction time, will produce 950,000 tons of Portland cement annually when full capacity is reached. Bernburg, in the foothills of the Harz Mountains, is in the middle of rich lime deposits.

Three construction teams and 44 construction employees were given government awards for their excellent work in building the new plant.

He Bombed Europe

Major General Werner Panitzki, new head of West Germany's Luftwaffe, was an officer in a fighter squadron which protected Hitler's bombers on their flights over Britain. With his fighter squadron he also supported the blitzing of Poland, Norway, France and Yugoslavia.

Here is a thumb-nail sketch of his career: he joined the Prussian police when he was 19, but as soon as Hitler started building a Luftwaffe he volunteered for it, and was soon moving rapidly up the military ladder. He was a General Staff officer in the First Air Fleet when it attacked Poland, under the command of war criminal General Kesselring. As commander of a fighter squadron he took part in the battles of Norway and France, and became Group Captain during the Battle of Britain.

Promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he took on a top position in Goering's Luftwaffe General Staff, where he stayed until the end of the war.

A prisoner of war from 1945 to 1947, he worked in the "American Military History Project", the camouflage group which formed the basis for the West German officers' corps. As soon as the first steps to organise the West German armed forces were taken in 1952, Panitz was appointed head of the embryo Luftwaffe, becoming Deputy Inspector of the Luftwaffe in 1957.

He now replaces General Josef Kammhuber, another top nazi officer, as head of the West German Luftwaffe.

Replacing Panitzki as Commander of the Northern Luftwaffe Group in West Germany is Major General Eugen Walter, who held various prominent General Staff jobs in Hitler's Luftwaffe and became commander of a V-1 Division which blitzed Britain with V weapons during the last years of the war.

Party Congress Summoned

The Sixth Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany will be held in Berlin on January 15th—19th 1962, it was officially announced early in October. During the coming three months the 1,600,000 members of the Socialist Unity Party will elect delegates to the Congress on the basis of one delegate to every 800 members.

The Socialist Unity Party, most important party in the German Democratic Republic, was founded in April 1946 through the amalgamation of the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party.

Main points on the agenda of the Congress will be a report on the work of the Central Committee since the last Congress in 1958; a debate on the new programme of the Party; and a debate on a new statute for the Party.

The draft programme and the new statute will be published shortly, so that every member can discuss them thoroughly and submit amendments to be considered at the Congress.

Addressing the meeting of the Central Committee which fixed the date and agenda for the Congress, Party Secretary Walter Ulbricht stated that a new programme was necessary since the basic problems of transition from capitalism to socialism had been solved in the German Democratic Republic. The new programme would provide a ideological and theoretical basis for the solution of the basic questions in the coming period, in particular the completion of the construction of socialism.

Turning to the question of a German Peace Treaty and the solution of the West Berlin problem, Walter Ulbricht stressed that these problems remained extremely urgent, and a solution could not be indefinitely postponed. After the American Congressional elections in November, negotiations on these subjects would be resumed between the Soviet Union and the United States. The most urgent points on the agenda remained abolition of the occupation regime in West Berlin on the basis of the signature of peace treaty; the removal of the NATO base in West Berlin; and the acceptance of both German states as members of the United Nations. The German Democratic Republic favoured a sensible agreed solution of these problems which would take into consideration as far as possible the rightful interests of all parties concerned.

"I should like to emphasise", stated Walter Ulbricht, "that West Berlin is not a part of the West German Federal Republic, and will never become a part of that state. The West Berlin Senate would be well advised to renounce its policy of provocation aginst the GDR, and to get used to the idea that what is needed is peaceful cooperation between the West Berlin Senate and the Government of the GDR."

Wehrmacht in Britain
— a Yugoslav View

"It's nice here in Britain, Fritz. I'm almost ready to forgive them for fighting us in the war"
(Cartoon by Dragan Savić, "Borba", Belgrade)

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

The story of three young men of Munich, in West Germany, who were recently fined for taking seriously instructions given by the Bonn Ministry of the Interior, deserves to be recorded.

The story started in November 1961, when the three men appeared one day on the Maximilian Platz in the middle of Munich. Each of them carried a spade in his hand, and a door on his back. They solemnly deposited the doors on the grass which covers the centre of the square, and then began to dig holes in the lawn. Passers-by asked them what they were doing, and the three young men politely stated that they were acting on the instructions of Gerhard Schroeder, former nazi storm trooper and West German Minister of the Interior (subsequently promoted to Foreign Minister).

Holes

Before their holes had got very deep, police cars arrived to investigate the growing crowds, and carted the young men off, although the excavators showed their printed instructions from the Ministry of the Interior. The mills of the West German judicial machine grind exceeding slow, so it was some months later before the three young men had their day in court, charged with causing a public nuisance. And here in court they had a chance to read aloud the instructions which had led them to dig the holes. They had found the instructions in an air-raid precautions leaflet issued by the Bonn Ministry of the Interior, entitled "Everyone Has a Chance".

Mind Your Head

This leaflet, similar to those published in a number of western countries, gave instructions as to what was to be done in the case of a nuclear attack. One of these tips was that in case of an atom-bomb explosion it was advisable to cover the head with anything readily available, such as a brief case; this was only a provisional help, the leaflet said; it was better to dig a hole, three feet wide and six feet deep, and cover it with some solid object such as a door taken off its hinges. With expressions of outraged innocence the three accused pointed out to the judge that the leaflet urged all citizens to make such preparations in good time, and that was all that they had been doing on Maximilian Platz.

The judge was unmoved by their pleas, and fined them 50 marks each. The young men paid the fine, and went round the corner, where they filed charges against the Minister of the Interior for inciting them to commit a nuisance. I regret that I have been unable to discover what happened to these charges, but I somehow doubt that they will get very far with the case.

Wonderland

A West German court has just neatly stood justice on its head again in acquitting a nazi war criminal. The criminal, Professor Kurt Leibbrand, today one of western Europe's leading traffic experts, served as a Pioneer Officer in the Wehrmacht, and in late summer 1944 he shot 22 Italian conscripts in southern France on the suspicion that they might mutiny.

Last month he went on trial before a West German court for this mass murder. The facts at issue were not disputed by Professor Leibbrand or the court, but on October 2nd he was acquitted for lack of evidence and released. The summing up by Judge Hoch makes extraordinary reading. It may be summarised as follows:

1. Leibbrand undoubtedly gave the orders for the execution.

2. Leibbrand's argument that he had received this murder order from his superior officer could not be shown to be false. (His superior officer, a certain Colonel Dernesch, is today a high officer in the Austrian army; he gave evidence at the trial, but no charges have been filed against him.)

3. Leibbrand could not be shown to have realised that the order given was a criminal order. Therefore he must be acquitted.

And the acquittal was received with rapturous applause by Leibbrand's brother officers who filled the public galleries in the courtroom.

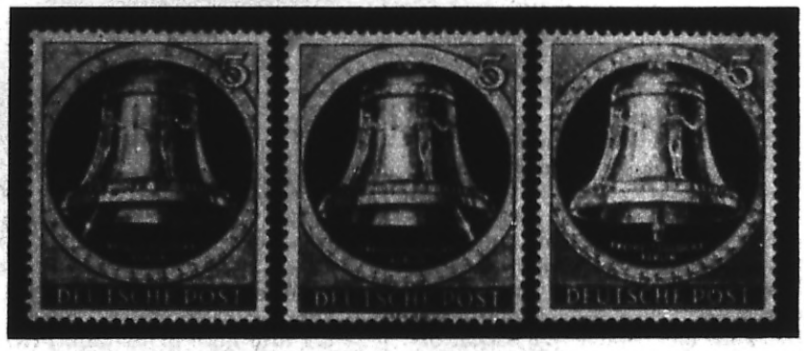
Of course, if the line of argument constructed by the judge were to be applied in all cases of war criminals, it is doubtful whether any nazi criminals, except perhaps Adolf Hitler himself, would ever be convicted. All of them, up to and including Adolf Eichmann, would just have to plead that they did not realise that the orders they had received were criminal, and would then get off scot-free.

Clangers

In connection with nothing in particular, we offer today a rather belated oddity which a stamp collector has just drawn to our attention.

At first sight, the three West Berlin stamps reproduced below all look the same, but if you peer closer you will see that the clapper of the bell changes its position. These three stamps were issued in West Berlin between 1951 and 1953, and the unofficial explanation of the changes is as follows: when the first version was issued, Adenauer's Christian Democrats protested that showing the clapper on the left constituted some sort of propaganda for the allegedly "leftish" Social Democrats; when the second version was produced, Willy Brandt's Social Democrats were shocked at this propaganda for rightism. Compromise version is the third stamp, with the bell suitably silenced.

But in the interests of parity, sportsmanship and all that, I might mention that the German Democratic Republic has not been without its philatelic clangers. It was not so bad when it produced a memorial stamp in 1956 for Thomas Mann with his hair parted on the wrong side, but a month or two earlier it had issued a commemorative for composer Robert Schumann. When music-lovers looked closer they found that the sheet of music which formed the background had been written by Franz Schubert.



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